

# Play and Exploration

Play and exploration are related. Babies use play to explore their world. They look and play with toys to explore colors and textures. Blocks for example, let babies explore things that stack up and balance. Caregivers can help babies explore by giving them safe and interesting objects to explore. Even basic household items such as plastic spoons or cups and empty boxes that can be filled are interesting to infants. A kitchen pot and wooden spoons make an instant drum set for an infant.

Encouragement and positive responses from adults, motivate or provide reason for babies to explore and learn. Everything in the world is new to a baby. By participating in explorations with the baby, caregivers can deepen their attachment to their children.

## **Play from Birth to 6 Months:**

- Play games with toys or objects that the baby can grasp.
- Place colorful toys where the baby can learn to recognize and reach them. Name the colors of the toy as baby chooses one to play with.
- Make noise with a rattle or other toy.
- Gently shake, stretch and exercise the baby's arms and legs while smiling and talking to the baby.
- Follow the baby's lead, or example. Laugh and smile after the baby laughs and smiles.

## **Play from 6 to 12 Months:**

Babies from six to twelve months of age can play somewhat more complicated games and handle more toys.

- Play peek-a-boo with the baby.
- Set toys just out of reach so that the baby has to crawl or reach/stretch to them. Encourage the baby and praise them.
- Read to the baby from simple books that have big pictures. It is never too soon to read and introduce books to babies.
- Play silly songs and dance with the baby. Help the baby clap or bounce in rhythm with the music.
- Give babies plastic buckets or other containers that they can fill up with water, sand or toys and dump out. Talk the baby through the activity, describing what can be done.
- After each play activity, reward the baby with positive responses.